

## NCCAM Etiquette Guidelines

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is dedicated to evaluating complementary and alternative medicine using rigorous science. The successful pursuit of this mission relies in great part on the people who work for NCCAM. The Center recognizes the significance of each staff member's contribution and seeks to "promote a work culture characterized by integrity, mutual respect, teamwork, and open communication."<sup>1</sup>

In the spirit of creating and promoting this work culture, NCCAM designed its office space in Building 31 and Democracy II to create an open work environment that encourages staff interaction and a warm, professional atmosphere. The glass design, which is unconventional for government offices, ensures that all staff has access to natural light and a sense of the open community that NCCAM promotes. While this office design may be unique to NCCAM's work spaces in Building 31 and Democracy II, the commitment to promoting teamwork, open communication, and a warm, professional atmosphere extends to all of NCCAM's work spaces and staff members across the NIH.

Therefore, in support of the entire NCCAM community, the NCCAM Executive Committee created an Etiquette Committee charged with reaching out to NCCAM staff and creating etiquette guidelines. The Etiquette Committee, comprised of members from various NCCAM components, pursued the following process in the development of these guidelines:

- Gathered input from all levels of NCCAM staff
- Benchmarked with other government and private organizations
- Analyzed information collected
- Discussed implications of policy issues over a series of meetings
- Created draft policy for review by Executive Committee and staff

The following guidelines are designed to encourage the balance between personal expression and the needs of the whole NCCAM community. The Etiquette Committee based these guidelines on a general theme of "creating an environment that is respectful of our co-workers." Though some of these guidelines may seem to apply specifically to concerns unique to the open plan design of the workspaces in Building 31 and Democracy II, the principles behind these guidelines apply to all NCCAM staff.

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<sup>1</sup> *Expanding the Horizons of Healthcare: Five-Year Strategic Plan, 2001-2005*. NCCAM, 2000.

## **Working Together—Shared Spaces and Resources**

NCCAM promotes a friendly work environment that encourages an open exchange of ideas and information. Shared spaces and resources, such as the alternative workspaces in Building 31 and Democracy II or the library, are essential to creating this environment.

### **Alternative Workspaces**

Key to the NCCAM office design in Building 31 and Democracy II is alternative work areas for staff use:

- **Teaming Areas**—these are separate areas, such as the round meeting areas, or break out rooms, with tables and chairs in Building 31 and Democracy II. They are designed for a few staff members to quietly discuss projects or for an individual activity that requires quiet work time. If you need a laptop computer, check with the IT staff to see if one is available.
- **Open Teaming Areas**—open areas outside of offices with chairs and worktables. These areas are for visitors to use while waiting to meet with a staff member, for an individual activity that requires quiet work time, or for a small group gathering (groups should be cognizant of noise level when using these teaming areas).
- **Meeting Rooms** - in addition to the main conference room, Democracy II also has two meeting rooms that are available for smaller meetings or staff gathering.

### **Using Meeting Rooms**

Meeting rooms and the round break out rooms can be used for eating lunch. If you choose to eat lunch in the meeting or break out rooms please remember to:

- a. Keep the noise level down for the staff working near the meeting rooms
- b. Clean up after yourself so that the room is ready for the next meeting.
- c. Allow professional meetings to take precedence over lunch gatherings.

Please note: The main conference rooms in Building 31 and Democracy II are solely reserved for professional meetings.

### **Using the Library**

Be courteous when using shared resources and bring back materials in a timely manner. Please place materials in box designated for returns or observe any library procedures.

### **Lights**

- Lights should be kept on in open work areas when staff are working. However, if staff members in a particular work area want to have the lights off, they first need to check with their co-workers in that area.
- Lights should be turned off at the end of the workday in order to conserve energy.

### **Office Temperature**

- If you want to change the temperature in your area, please check with other staff members that share the area. In order to change the temperature, please contact:
  - Building 31: Doris Kingsbury
  - Democracy II: Beverly King
  - IRP: Bridget Agapito
- Space heaters are not allowed in on- or off-campus buildings, as they are a fire hazard. Please see bullet point above if you are having a problem with your temperature.

### **Recycling**

Recycling is available. You may recycle paper (white and colored) in the large, white cardboard recycling boxes, which are placed in open areas, or you can use smaller recycling boxes at your desk.

### **White Noise Generators**

White noise generators were installed to help dampen sound in the open office spaces in Building 31 and Democracy II.

### **Window Blinds**

Offices in Building 31 and Democracy II were designed with glass walls to share natural light with all staff. In support of this design, please leave blinds open whenever possible (acknowledging that blinds serve the purpose of limiting direct sunlight and sun glare).

## **Communications**

Technology has given us many wonderful means to keep us in touch—e-mail, voicemail, and cellular phones—but remember that your office mates might hear more than you had planned (or more than they may wish to hear). It is best to keep personal calls and conversations to a minimum. The following tips can help facilitate workplace serenity.

### **Cellular phones**

- Take your cell phone with you when you leave your desk or turn the volume off. This will help avoid having the phone ring in your desk and disturb other staff.
- While cellular phones are valuable tools please consider turning the phones off or set to vibrate while at your desk or attending meetings (to be respectful of the speaker and other attendees).

### **Mass e-mails**

Use of mass e-mails should be limited to business that affects the entire office. If your e-mail is not applicable to all staff, create a separate distribution list.

### **Speakerphones**

Avoid using the speakerphone when checking voicemail or making calls unless you have a conference call. To help minimize noise, please conduct conference calls in closed offices when possible.

### **Soliciting**

It is not appropriate to solicit staff at their offices or workstations for monetary contributions to causes. The only approved solicitation is for the Combined Federal Campaign. This is different from the solicitation for events in the office. Although it is generally not permissible for employees to solicit gifts to superiors or to accept gifts from a lower-paid employee, there is an exception that permits employees to make voluntary contributions of nominal amounts for gifts of food or refreshments to be shared in the office or for group gifts on certain special infrequent occasions (such as a bridal shower, baby shower, or retirement party). Of course, any flier for such an event must make it clear that contributions are strictly voluntary. If you have any questions about the gift rules or the rules concerning solicitation in the workplace, please feel free to visit the NCCAM Intranet page on ethics at [nccamintranet.nci.nih.gov/policies/ethics.html](http://nccamintranet.nci.nih.gov/policies/ethics.html).

### **Telephone etiquette**

Develop a quiet, professional “telephone voice” to minimize disturbing other staff while you are handling calls.

## Kitchens, Food, and Eating

### The Kitchen

When using NCCAM kitchen facilities please note the following guidelines:

- Remember to clean up after yourself. Dishes should not be left in the kitchen. If your dirty dishes must soak please remove them by the end of that working day.
- Put your name and date on food placed in the refrigerator. Labels will be stored in the kitchen for your convenience. This will help when it comes time to clean out the refrigerator.
- Clean out your old or expired food at the end of each week.
- Label items that are for common use (coffee, tea) so everyone can enjoy common use food and supplies. Please do not eat food that is not labeled for common use. If labels or other kitchen supplies are low please call your building contact:
  - Building 31: Doris Kingsbury
  - Democracy II: Beverly King
  - IRP: Bridget Agapito
- Avoid food smells by turning on a kitchen fan (if available) while cooking and keeping the fan on until food smells dissipate.
- Keep noise level low while in the kitchen as staff may be working within close proximity.

### Places to Eat

**Meeting Rooms and Round Break Out Rooms:** Can be used by staff to eat lunch. If you choose to eat lunch in these rooms please remember to:

- Be mindful of the noise level as there may be staff working around the meeting rooms
- Clean up after yourself
- Remember that professional meetings take precedence over lunch gatherings.

Please note: The main conference rooms in Building 31 and Democracy II are solely reserved for professional meetings.

**Workstations:** Staff are permitted to eat at workstations, however, please be considerate of your co-workers and dispose of any left over foods properly and minimize your noise. Those who work in laboratories may have rules about not eating food around work areas. If you are unsure, check with your laboratory supervisor.

**Picnic Tables:** There are picnic tables located outside both Building 31 and Democracy II and at other locations on the NIH campus. An outside lunch could be a wonderful break on a beautiful afternoon.

## **Simple Ways To Better Work Together**

One of the best and simplest ways to make an office a friendlier environment is to smile. Acknowledge your fellow staff members. Enjoy your environment. Here are some other ways to better work together:

- When approaching a staff member at work, whether in an office or workstation knock first or ask if it is a good time to interrupt. Look for eye contact or a cue to initiate conversation.
- When approached by another staff member while busy, acknowledge your co-worker and give him/her a signal to wait or return later.
- Use discretion when interrupting conference calls and meetings.
- Be aware that people can hear your conversations and see you and your work. Speak quietly and use language appropriate for a professional office setting. All staff should appropriately represent NCCAM.
- Avoid calling out to co-workers.
- Help minimize the noise for staff in workstations or open areas by closing office doors when meeting with other staff.
- Be aware that other noises (e.g., radios, music, whistling, humming, singing) may distract other staff members. Please keep at a minimum.
- Try to minimize informal meetings/socialization at workstations or outside of offices. Informal gatherings of staff, even for work-related conversations, can be distracting to co-workers. For extended conversations please use a conference or meeting room.
- Be aware that some staff members may be allergic or very sensitive to strong perfumes, colognes, scented lotions, etc. Please use with discretion.
- Avoid using screen savers that make noise or have images that are inappropriate for the office.
- Be considerate of each other's offices and workstations and ask before using supplies and personal items from desks.
- Please keep your office/workstation presentable. Since we are in an open environment, orderliness/cleanliness is more apparent to co-workers and visitors.

- Music should be played at a level that others cannot hear and must be appropriate for a professional business environment. Music carries even if it is low.
- Make new employees and contractors feel welcome.

### **What To Do If You Have An Issue**

These guidelines have been compiled for NCCAM staff use. If someone is not complying with the guidelines an employee may wish to discreetly discuss the concern with that employee. Address etiquette concerns with fellow employees politely and privately. Be tactful and respectful when approaching someone. If you do not feel comfortable approaching another staff member about a problem, talk to your supervisor.